

The White Arcades (part one)

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The White Arcades (part one)

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Summary

Will and Hannibal's first few months together post-Fall.

Notes

This comes after Tell Me You'll Wait For Me, and it takes place a little while before Dreams Are Like Water. Basically, I'm filling in the gaps in the 'verse.

Hannibal overnights at the clinic; the dogs, no doubt, are to be spoiled in his absence.

Will understands that he is being handed a knife.

The currents that he is just beginning to learn are becoming ropes of silver and salt, and they are slowly tying the archipelago shut. If he wants to cut himself free, now would be a prescient time.

The skies over Vakkrehejm constrict. They breath shallow, corseted by cloud.

When he returns from the mainland, Hannibal has Ukko's pale blessings already dusting his hair and bag. The rime is like gauze, and as fragile as the face Hannibal rests for only a moment, to thaw, in the warmth relief of Will's hands.

So, the days pass, and the blizzards bind the island to itself, white fetters forged in a place that has no light, no longitude, no life.

Will has remained, but he is finding reasons to rabbit off into the petrified woods. The north of their island is expertly laced and ligatured, and Will must tread an increasingly intricate path through the sparkling shibari. All is balanced, bladed; the displacement of a single, shining strand, the echo of a sigh, could bring down hell, and all could be split apart, before it is fully mended.

There is danger in ignoring consequence, as well as a certain wild comfort.

Finally, Hannibal waits for Will in the kitchen.

Boots are kicked against the scraper by the back door. Will curses and stumbles in, half out of his wrappings. He cricks himself straight, having been willing to bend through boughed and ice-wired tunnels, between drift-smothered traps of razoring brambles, as deep in his own mind as he is in the deceitful, dazzling snow, if it means, perversely, they have *space*.

"A productive foray?"

Will frowns and drops his snowy things onto the floor. Hannibal decides that next year, if there is a next year, they must have a mud room.

Will shows his empty palms, as he sometimes does to the dogs.

"Sorry, no treats. What were you hoping for? Morels?"

Hannibal smiles, a little. "Chanterelles would be more likely, but I am aware there is little left to forage for."

"Right." Will doesn't answer the question that Hannibal doesn't ask, and goes, almost unwillingly, through the little white house to the fireside.

Hannibal has been reading. Sketching. Composing. Will is not the only one unable to get comfortable.

"Did you, uh, need a hand with something?" Will listens to the dogs snoring. The straits muttering to themselves through the layers of windowing.

But, in truth, there are few preparations left with which to occupy themselves. The hooks in the larder are already straining with the weight of meat. Herbs are corded and braided, and the autumn fruit racked.

Life is stripping itself down. It is becoming painfully simple. There will be talk by the fireside. And afterwards, there will be the taste of birchsmoke on their skin.

As a pastime, so far, the white-out of near-constant bliss seems to be working just fine. And Will worries about that. Or doesn't worry enough. He feels his is a future knotted within the intimacies of winter.

He asks himself, can it be enough? But he too is adept at not asking quite the right question.

Will shivers, and Hannibal comes to stand at his back, scrubbing at his scalp with a towel, where Will's curls are growing back, unruly as the first feathering on an osprey chick.

"Yes," Hannibal says, equably enough, although the words that follow could be seen as barbed. "Would you come upstairs with me? That is, if you are not occupied with anything else?"

They do not go into their bedroom, this time. Once more in unfamiliar territory, Will frowns again.

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